

Message Text

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TAGS: SHUM, TH

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: THAILAND

1. THE HUMPHREY SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WILL HOLD HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MARCH 4 (PUBLIC TESTIMONY) AND 7. DEPUTY SECRETARY WARREN CHRISTOPHER WILL TESTIFY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE AT 11:00 MONDAY, MARCH 7 ACCOMPANIED BY COORDINATOR FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS-DESIGNATE PATT DERIAN AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES FROM EACH OF THE REGIONAL BUREAUS. AFTER PRESENTING HIS GENERAL STATEMENT ON U.S. POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY IS EXPECTED TO BE ASKED QUESTIONS ON A VARIETY OF SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS SUBJECTS. THE FOLLOWING CONTINGENCY GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CASE THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND ARISES. THIS GUIDANCE HAS BEEN VERY CAREFULLY REVIEWED WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT AND REFLECTS THE ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS WELL AS OVERALL U.S. INTERESTS.

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2. THAILAND

--ON OCTOBER 5, 1976, PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT, HEAD

OF THE LAST CONSTITUTIONALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT, ORDERED POLICE UNITS TO ARREST A GROUP OF STUDENTS AT THAMMASAT

UNIVERSITY. THE RESULTING POLICE-STUDENT CONFRONTATION ON THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 6 LEFT 40 DEAD AND 3,000 ARRESTED. SIX HOURS LATER, IN THE WAKE OF THIS VIOLENCE AND CONFRONTING THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER URBAN DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE, THE THAI MILITARY TOOK CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT. AROUND THE WORLD, TELEVISION AND PRESS PHOTO COVERAGE OF THE VIOLENCE AT THAMMASAT WAS REPORTED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE NEWS OF THE COUP D'ETAT. THE RESULTING ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION IN THE MINDS OF MANY WAS THAT THE VIOLENCE WAS TRIGGERED BY THE COUP RATHER THAN PRECEDING IT.

--OF THE 3,000 ARRESTED OCTOBER 6, APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT HAVE BEEN RELEASED. THAI OFFICIALS INFORM US THAT, IN ADDITION TO THESE LARGELY STUDENT ARRESTS, SOME 3,000 OTHERS HAVE BEEN DETAINED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF MARTIAL LAW SINCE OCTOBER 6, 1976. IN THIS LATTER CATEGORY, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THOSE DETAINED FALL INTO CATEGORIES OF COMMON CRIMINALS SUCH AS PETTY THIEVES, NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS, ETC. THE MAJORITY OF THESE ARE STILL UNDER DETENTION. IN ALL, APPROXIMATELY 430 PERSONS APPEAR TO BE UNDER DETENTION ON POLITICAL GROUNDS.

--THE WIDESPREAD ARRESTS OF OCTOBER 6 AND ENSUING WEEKS OFTEN OCCURRED WITHOUT DUE PROCESS. SINCE NOVEMBER 1976, SUCH ARRESTS HAVE ALMOST COMPLETELY CEASED. NO MEMBERS OF THE PREVIOUS DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN ARRESTED OR DETAINED SINCE THE COUP. THE 430 HELD ESSENTIALLY ON POLITICAL GROUNDS ARE EX-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PECTED TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

--THE PROVISION OF A MODEST AMOUNT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION TO THE THAI OF OUR CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THEIR SECURITY, INDEPENDENCE AND STABILITY IN THE NEW SITUATION WHICH PREVAILS FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF OUR ARMED FORCES. THE THAI ARE SUBJECTED TO SMALL-SCALE RAIDS FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS, AS WELL AS EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE THAI COMMUNIST INSURGENCY. TO CUT OFF PRECIPITOUSLY THE TRADITIONAL SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR THE THAI MILITARY AT A TIME WHEN THEY FACE A CONSIDERABLE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREAT WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT UPON US-THAI RELATIONS AND ON THE ATTITUDES OF OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

--ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE VERY CLEAR ITS CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT FOR FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD THEIR ELIMINATION.

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